

# NIFC News

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## **BLUE RIBBON PANEL ON AERIAL FIREFIGHTING ANNOUNCES FINDINGS**

Boise, Idaho, December 6, 2002 – The Blue Ribbon Panel on Aerial Firefighting today revealed its findings at a news conference in Boise, Idaho. The panel was chartered in mid August to identify key information for planning the safe and effective future of the agencies' aerial firefighting. Panel members Jim Hall, Earl McKinney and Bill Scott presented the panel's findings in the areas of safety, operational effectiveness, training, contracting, and management of the programs.

The panel, led by co-chairmen Jim Hall, former NTSB Chairman, and Jim Hull, Texas State Forester, led six public town hall meetings with private industry contractors, entrepreneurs and academia. They met with aviation professionals within the federal and state firefighting agencies to look at problems and successes in the areas of airtankers (heavy, medium and single engine airtankers), leadplanes and Air Supervision Modules, helicopters, and Air Attack platforms.

USDA Forest Service Fire Director Jerry Williams, and USDI Bureau of Land Management Fire Director Larry Hamilton also presented a joint statement from Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth and BLM Director Kathleen Clarke. The two Fire Directors announced that Chief Bosworth and Director Clarke are directing immediate changes to the agencies' aerial firefighting programs.

- The Forest Service and the BLM will no longer contract for the C-130A or PB4-Y aircraft as airtankers. The agencies will be consulting with the Federal Aviation Administration to develop a rigorous inspection and maintenance program for the other models of heavy airtankers to provide a greater margin of safety. Aircraft that pass the inspection and follow the maintenance program will continue to be used.
- In Addition the Forest Service is suspending fire mission operations of 19 government owned P-58 Barons that are used as Lead Planes for Airtankers and four Sherpa (Shorts 330) smokejumper aircraft pending evaluations of safety issues identified in the Blue Ribbon panel's report.

The statement from Chief Bosworth and Director Clarke, and the Blue Ribbon panel's final report are available on the NIFC website at [www.nifc.gov](http://www.nifc.gov)



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